Written submission from Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority

Further to your request to attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Thursday 24 November 2016 please accept this formal submission in advance of myself and the SPA Chief Executive’s attendance.

The Scottish Police Authority’s financial planning process to consider and publish a police budget for 2017/18 has been underway for some months now and we are working closely with Police Scotland and Scottish Government officials to consider potential funding, budget requirements and pressures anticipated in 2017/18.

While publication of the Scottish Government’s draft 2017/18 budget is scheduled for December 2016, this has not delayed the Authority from embarking on the required planning process. In addition, the Authority does have some degree of certainty for the year ahead due to the Scottish Government’s commitment to protect the revenue budget in real terms within this parliamentary session.

A significant part of our financial planning process to date has been carried out during 2016/17 to understand the organisational cost base. This work is assisting the 2017/18 budget planning underway and is scheduled to be considered in detail at a closed meeting of the SPA’s Finance and Investment Committee in early December. This work includes all current known pressures anticipated in 2017/18 including those common to all public bodies such as pay inflation, pay award, wider inflationary pressures. The continuing inequality of treatment for policing in Scotland in relation to VAT remains a significant cost we continue to factor into our planning assumptions for the year ahead.

In addition to the work to understand the baseline costs for the year ahead, the SPA and Police Scotland are currently working collaboratively to set out a vision and strategy for policing over the next decade. This is a significant organisational focus for the SPA and Police Scotland that will deliver incremental and longer term strategic organisational change. As you would expect, this work has been closely aligned with the financial planning processes for the coming year. In turn the budget set for 2017/18 will align closely with the content of that strategy.

I would seek to reassure the sub-committee that the SPA’s financial planning process is underpinned by a robust governance framework that supports appropriate development and delivery of a budget for 2017/18. This process allows for detailed consideration of all aspects of the budget and ensures the appropriate oversight and testing in line with the principles of best value.

There are a significant number of meetings scheduled before the end of December to consider financial planning undertaken to date against the Scottish Government’s final allocation expected in December. These meetings include John Foley as Accountable Officer, members of the SPA’s Finance and Investment Committee, Police Scotland and meetings involving wider SPA board. These are scheduled
throughout January, February and March. Formal approval of the 2017/18 budget is anticipated at a full public Board meeting at the end of March 2017.

Andrew Flanagan
Chair
Scottish Police Authority
21 November 2016